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Vocabulary Readers

On Top of The World

by Dixie Lee Petrokis

Number of Words: 588

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On Top of The World



by Dixie Lee Petrokis



Strategy Focus

Will two brave climbers make it to the “top of the world”? As you read, try to **predict** what will happen next.

Key Vocabulary

belay to secure a climber with a rope

carabiners metal rings to connect things

desperate very serious; troubled

fatigue extreme tiredness

foothold secure place to step

functioned filled a purpose or role

ice ax small, sharp ax for winter climbing

improvising making up or inventing
something as you go

overcome conquer; triumph over

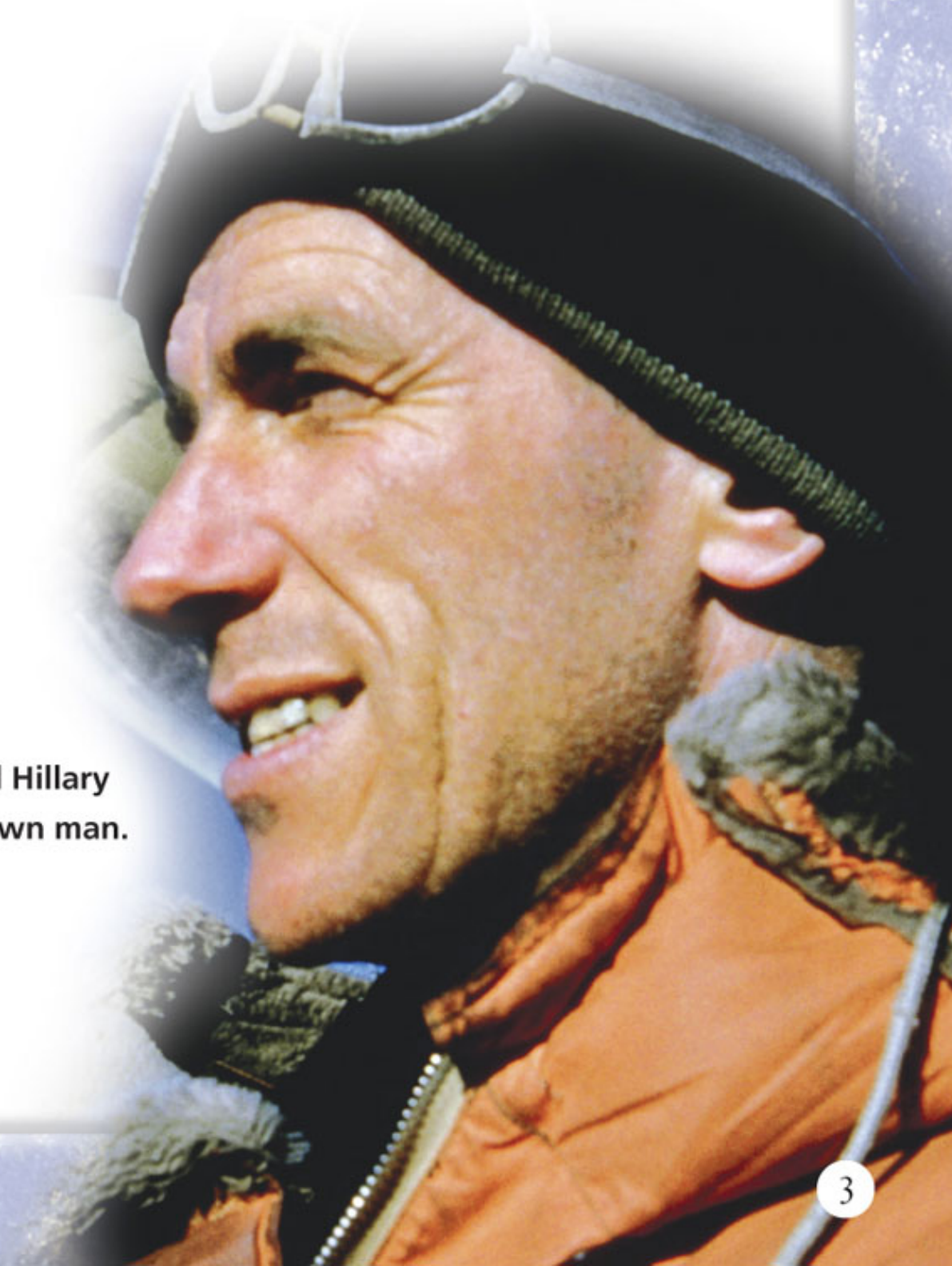
pitons spikes hammered into rock or ice

Word Teaser

Add an “s” to the end of this word to get the kind of clothes that soldiers wear.

As a teenager, Edmund Hillary hiked the mountains of his New Zealand home. Hillary loved to climb. When he reached a mountaintop, he forgot all about the **fatigue**, or tiredness, he had felt on the way up. Nothing matched the thrill of looking down from a snowy peak.

Edmund Hillary
as a grown man.



The Journey Begins

In 1953, a British climbing team decided to go on a great adventure. They wanted to climb the tallest mountain in the world—Mount Everest. British climbers had been trying to accomplish this goal for 40 years. But no one had ever completed the dangerous climb.



Mount Everest is in the Himalaya Mountains, between Tibet and Nepal.

The team asked Hillary if he would join them. They chose him not only for his expert climbing skills, but also for his determination. Hillary always fought to **overcome**, or get beyond, any difficulties in his path.

**Local guides directed
Hillary and the team.**

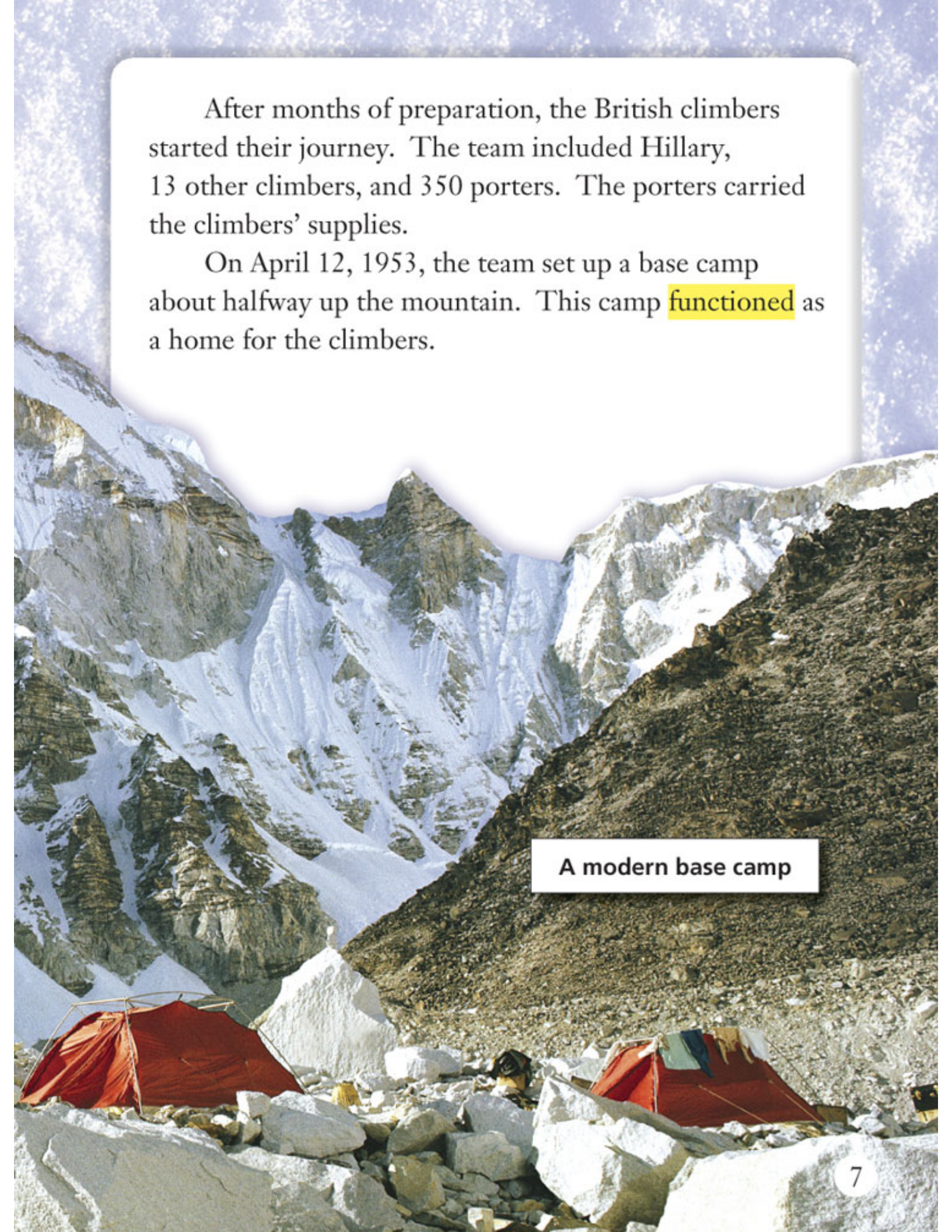


The team planned carefully. But they knew that some things were out of their control. Weather and other conditions could change suddenly on Everest. The climbers would have to do a lot of **improvising**, figuring out their next move as they went along.



After months of preparation, the British climbers started their journey. The team included Hillary, 13 other climbers, and 350 porters. The porters carried the climbers' supplies.

On April 12, 1953, the team set up a base camp about halfway up the mountain. This camp **functioned** as a home for the climbers.



A modern base camp

About two weeks after setting up base camp, Hillary set out to make a trail through the ice. His teammate Tenzing Norgay went with him. They used small, sharp **ice axes** to cut steps in the icy mountain. It was dangerous and tiring work. But it was important. These steps would give the other climbers secure **footholds** as they climbed.

A mountain climber using an ice ax.



The climbers were always careful to **belay**, or secure, themselves to each other with ropes. They also hammered **pitons**, or metal spikes, into the mountainside. They used strong metal rings called **carabiners** to connect their ropes to the pitons.

**a carabiner connected
to a piton**

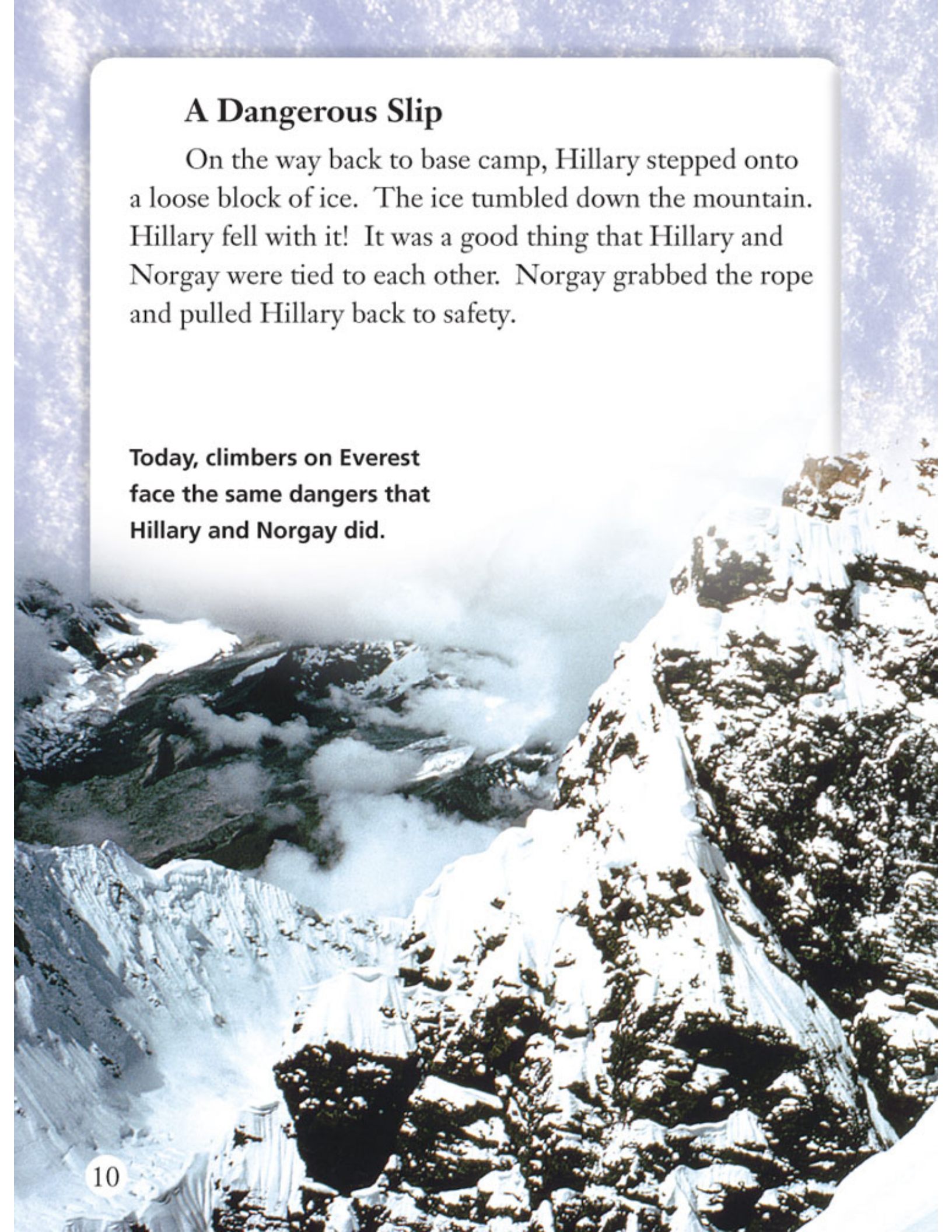


belaying ropes

A Dangerous Slip

On the way back to base camp, Hillary stepped onto a loose block of ice. The ice tumbled down the mountain. Hillary fell with it! It was a good thing that Hillary and Norgay were tied to each other. Norgay grabbed the rope and pulled Hillary back to safety.

Today, climbers on Everest face the same dangers that Hillary and Norgay did.



Hillary might not have survived without his equipment. Just one slip on Mount Everest could be deadly. A climber could fall tens of thousands of feet!



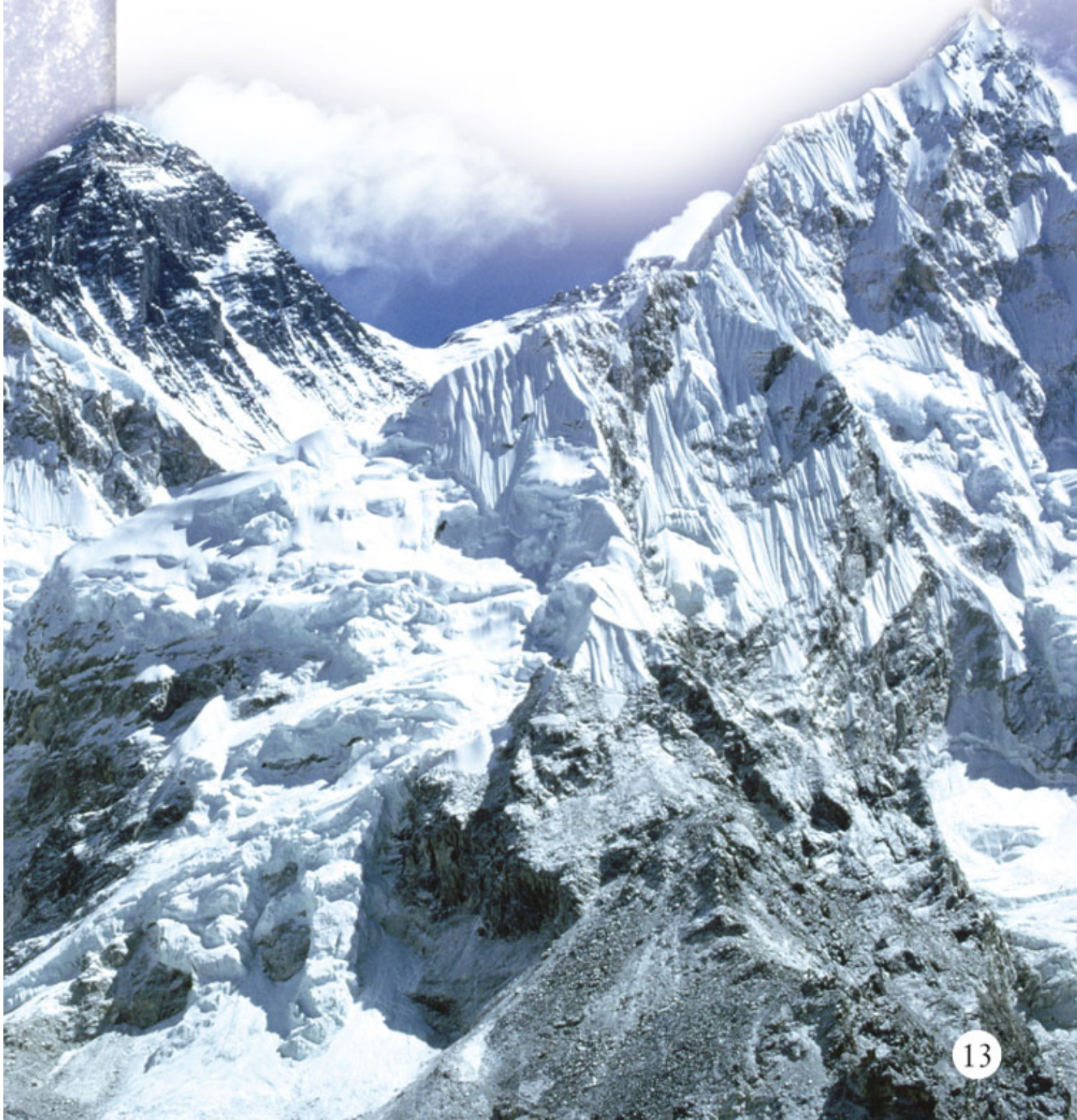
The Final Climb

By the end of May, the British team had been climbing for many days. They had now reached a new camp much closer to Everest's peak. Two of Hillary's teammates tried to make the final climb to the top. They were just 328 feet away from the summit when a blizzard struck! Their equipment started to fail, too. It was a desperate situation. Feeling hopeless, the pair turned back.

**Blizzards make it difficult
for climbers to see or move.**



Back at camp, the team discussed what to do next. Should they give up? No. They decided to send their best two climbers, Hillary and Norgay, to make another attempt.

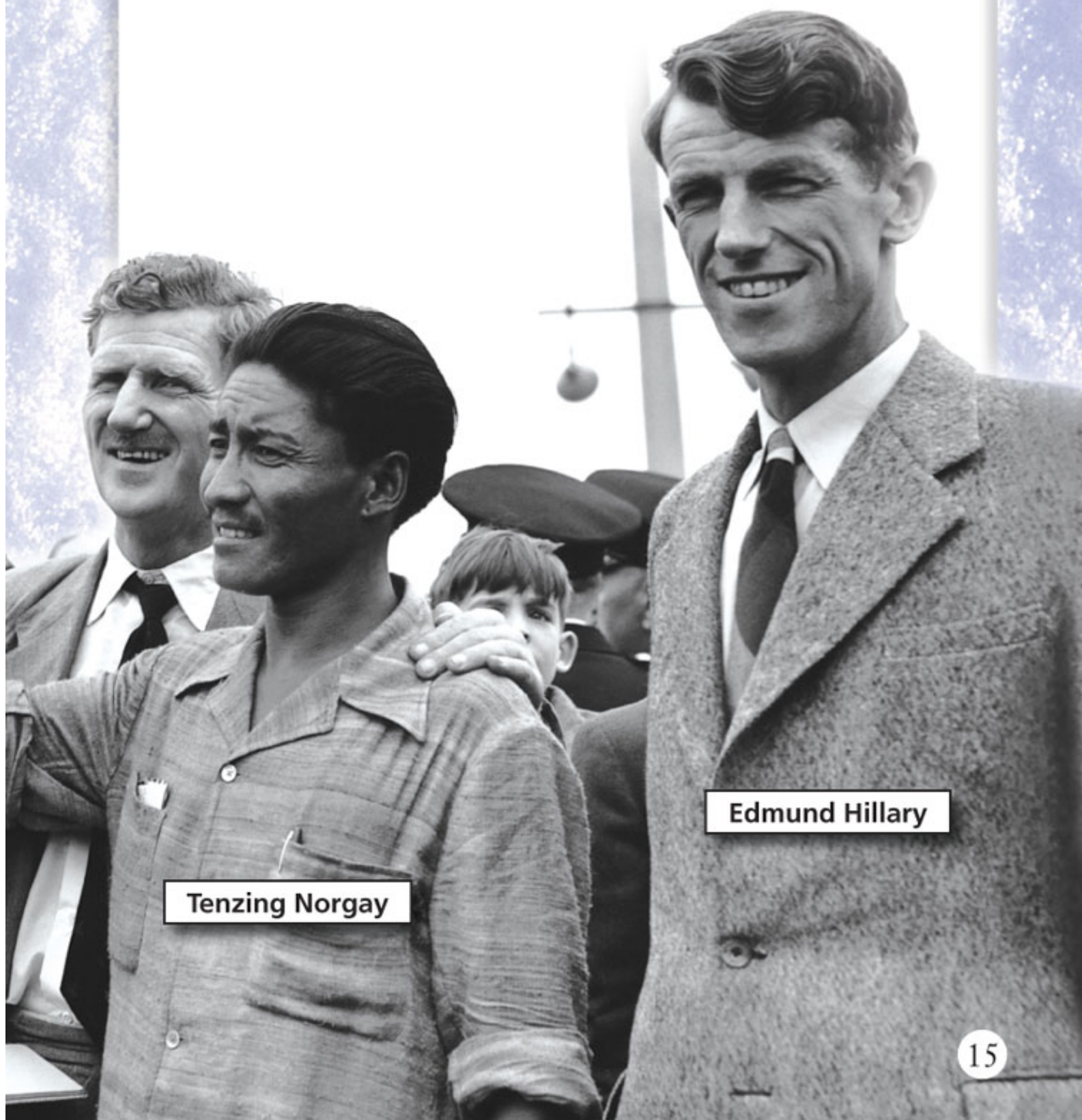


At 6:30 a.m. on May 29, 1953, Hillary and Norgay began their climb. They headed straight up a 40-foot wall of ice and snow. Each man used an ice ax to cut steps in the ice. They belayed each other up, inch by inch.

Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary show the ice ax they carried to the top of Mount Everest



Five hours later, Hillary and Norgay stopped climbing. They stood on the summit of Mount Everest and admired the view. They had made it. They were the first two people on the top of the world!



Edmund Hillary

Tenzing Norgay

Responding

Putting Words to Work

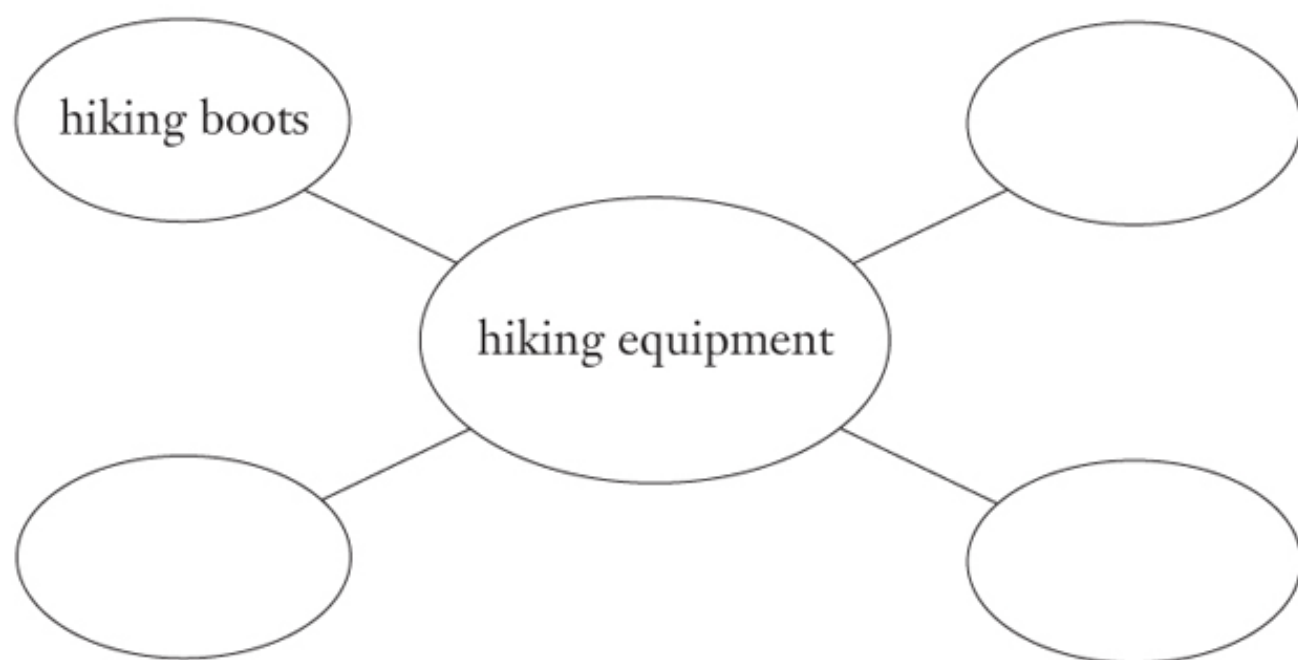
1. Tell about a time when you had to **overcome** a problem.
2. Describe a good **foothold**.
3. What events show that Norgay and Hillary **functioned** as a team? In your answer, be sure to put the events in the correct order.
4. Do you think climbing down a mountain might cause as much **fatigue** as climbing up? Explain your answer.
5. **PARTNER ACTIVITY:** Think of a word you learned in the text. Explain its meaning to your partner and give an example.

Answer to Word Teaser

fatigues

Word Builder

Carabiners and ropes are useful equipment for mountain climbers. What other equipment would you need for a hike or a climb? Copy the web below. Add more kinds of hiking equipment or supplies.



Write About It

Write a paragraph explaining how you would prepare for a hiking trip. Use at least two words from your Word Web.

Key Vocabulary

belay
carabiners
desperate
fatigue
foothold
functioned
ice ax
improvising
overcome
pitons

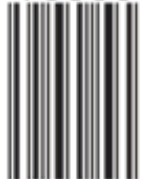
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